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There's no room for deals over Soviet spies at the UN

It's hard not to be confused by the continuing dispute between the U.S. and the Soviets — and, also, within the Reagan administration — over the expulsion order issued by Washington few weeks back. Although Nicholas Daniloff was still a hostage when President Reagan ordered 25 UN-based Soviet spies out of the country, the administration insisted that it had intended, in any case, to expel the men in question — all espionage agents posing as diplomats.

Yet since the Daniloff-Zakharov swap, Washington seems to have been backtracking. Fourteen of the named 25 have left but, as The Post's Washington bureau chief Niles Lathem discloses on Page 2, 11 remain — and the indication from U.S. intelligence sources is that these 11 are key Soviet snoops.

Two men on the list of 25, Valery Savchenko and Vladislav Svortkysov, are said to be the most important agents the Russians have at the UN. Why are they being allowed to remain? Why does the Reagan administration seem ready to bargain about their presence, to make concessions?

The decision to expel Russia's 25 most senior spies at the UN was long overdue. Indeed, considering how many Soviet agents there are at the UN, White House restraint up to now

seems little short of amazing.

U.S. intelligence specialists estimate that one in three of all Soviet, East bloc and client-state diplomats posted at the UN engage in espionage.

That's a powerful lot of spies.

There are more than more than 585 Soviet, East Bloc and client state nationals working for the UN and its agencies in New York. Another 600-plus are attached to their countries' UN diplomatic missions.

Savchenko, as the KGB station chief, and Svortkysov, as the station chief of the GRU, are said to be in overall charge of the several hundred agents away from the UN.

The Soviets, who have protested the innocence of the two men in but a *pro forma* fashion, cannot argue that the U.S. is exceeding its authority in throwing the spies out.

U.S. law, which governs U.S.-UN relations, states uncompromisingly that "nothing in the agreement [establishing the UN in New York] shall be construed as in any way diminishing, abridging or weakening the right of the United States to safeguard its own security."

Let's start exercising that right for a change. Let's get the Soviet spies — Savchenko and Svotkysov included — out of here.